



Point of Inquiry

An Investigation at Fort Point National Historic Site

How does a building reveal what is valuable to us?

This essential question frames *Point of Inquiry* and is meant to allow students to engage in historic inquiry at Fort Point National Historic Site. The essential question:

1. Reflects the essence of what they will study without directing them to one correct answer.
2. Provokes “how” or “why” questions rather than “what” questions.
3. Applies to places beyond Fort Point.
4. Invites discussion from everyone based on both experience and understanding.

Students will understand and explain the story and lasting influence of the Gold Rush from the perspective of public space. Students can read the question as what was “valuable” during the Gold Rush as well as today; and, interpret “us” to mean people of the 1850s and people of San Francisco today. They create and apply their own definition of “valuable.”

Program Goals

- Provide a place-based Social Studies education program that is inquiry-based, tied to the curriculum, and based on cooperative learning.
- Promote an understanding of the historic significance of Fort Point to Gold Rush San Francisco and how and why the National Park Service preserves and protects the fort.
- Serve as an outdoor classroom in which students can learn about the historical, cultural, and environmental forces that shaped the San Francisco Bay landscape during the California Gold Rush, and prompt students to consider similar issues and values in their own school neighborhood.
- Encourage students to value national parks as places for learning and recreation, and feel a personal connection to their local national park.
- Create a space for healthy physical activity to be fun and educational.

Program Objectives

- Students will develop skills to “read the landscape” by examining the purpose and perceived value of a variety of public buildings built during Gold Rush San Francisco and in their own school neighborhood today.
- Students will plan and conduct an inquiry-based investigation.
- Students will communicate investigations and construct reasonable explanations (spoken or written).
- Student will know what safety measures to consider when walking on park trails.
- Student will know the basics of the Leave No Trace philosophy.
- Student will leave with knowledge of what is available in the Presidio, how to access the resources, and why it is important to take care of the park.



Ties to the Curriculum – Social Studies Content for 4th Grade

4.3 Students explain the economic, social, and political life in California from the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic through the Mexican-American War, the Gold Rush, and the granting of statehood.

(3) Analyze the effects of the Gold Rush on settlements, daily life, politics, and the physical environment.

4.4 Students explain how California became an agricultural and industrial power, tracing the transformation of the California economy and its political and cultural development since the 1850s.

(3) Explain how the Gold Rush transformed the economy of California, including the types of products produced and consumed, changes in towns (e.g. Sacramento, San Francisco) and economic conflicts between diverse groups of people.

Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

- Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.
- Students judge the significance of the relative location of a place e.g., proximity to a harbor, on trade routes) and analyze how relative advantages or disadvantages can change over time.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View

- Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture.

Historical Interpretation

- Students summarize the key events of the era they are studying and explain the historical contexts of those events.
- Students identify the human and physical characteristics of the places they are studying and explain how those features form the unique character of those places.

Discussion and listening skills

- Chooses and creates effective presentation techniques
- Works with others to produce group reports and presentations
- Shows skills necessary for debates and discussions
- Divides tasks and delegates responsibility when working with a group
- Listens respectfully



Program Description

The program has three elements: pre-visit classroom lessons provided by the teacher and NPS and YMCA staff; a Fort Point field session facilitated by NPS and YMCA staff; and suggested post-visit lessons guided by the teacher.

Classroom Lessons

Booming Bay - Teacher Facilitated Lesson

Duration: One hour class session

Materials: Set of historic photographs (photocopies), student workbooks, map overhead, DVD

Procedure: Students form small groups of four; Groups report.

Teacher uses historic photographs of different structures during the Gold Rush to initiate a discussion about the use and meaning of buildings in 1850s San Francisco or Fort Point. Looking at the photographs, students can see buildings representative of the era - bank (financial growth), religious institution (community identity), hospital (public health), school (youth), factory (work), store (business), theater (leisure time) – and begin to generate observations and evidence of the value (explicit and implied) of distinct buildings.

The buildings offer the students the opportunity to interpret the link between the tangible (historic structures) and the intangible (what they represented at the time and to us today). The groups begin to assemble a view of San Francisco as a port city, a community, and the city's relationship to the bay that sustained it.

Students then study a map of Gold Rush San Francisco. They determine where they would situate a defensive fort. Students see the geographic relationship of the Golden Gate to the city and port of San Francisco.

Activity One

Teacher explains that the class is going to use photographs to “investigate” Gold Rush San Francisco before the visit to Fort Point. Teacher then models how to examine the historic photographs using the overhead of the photograph of the school from 1850s San Francisco. Teacher asks the class to study the photograph and together they complete a simple inquiry process using the following key questions:

- What do you notice about this building?
- What else do you see in the photograph?
- What does this building tell us about Gold Rush San Francisco?
- What question do you have about Gold Rush San Francisco after studying this photograph?



Teacher records the answers on the blackboard. Teacher distributes photocopies of Historic Photographs.

Then, students form small groups of four or five. Each group receives a photograph. Students record their observations and evidence in their workbooks. Each group shares their observations and conclusions with the larger class. Students ask questions of each other.

Teacher puts up the second overhead with the earliest photograph of San Francisco. Teacher poses the question to the class:

How do these buildings tell us what was valuable to Gold Rush San Francisco?

Students suggest ways that these buildings help them understand what Gold Rush San Francisco valued.

Activity Two

Teacher places the map overhead for the class to view. In their small groups, students study the map of San Francisco and the bay. Students consider the following question:

Where would you place a fort to protect the city of San Francisco?

Students present and justify their answer to their classmates in a large class discussion. Their recommendations are recorded on a copy of the overhead map.

Activity Three

Show the Point of Inquiry DVD.

Observing Objects – NPS and YMCA Facilitated Lesson

Duration: 1.30 hours

Materials: Artifacts, student workbooks, map of San Francisco and Third System forts, *Fort Point: Still Standing Watch*

Procedure: Students remain in their small groups of four.

Activity One

NPS facilitator asks students to share their conclusions from the previous lesson. NPS indicates where Fort Point was built, and uses map of Third System forts to show the value of San Francisco and its port.

Students receive an artifact representative of Fort Point. These artifacts introduce Fort Point to the class and continue the inquiry process for the students. The artifacts are related to the fort or to the people who occupied the fort. The artifacts give students a chance to think about what their objects are, what they were used for, and who might have used them.



The artifacts help the students develop investigative skills that will be applied in the fort visit. They are introduced to the ways people in historic preservation think about objects in relation to public space and buildings. They see the relationship between objects and the buildings in which they would be found. They begin to see how artifacts guide their understanding of the building, its purpose, and its value.

NPS facilitator explains the artifact activity. In small groups, students will examine their artifact and discuss and record the following:

1. What is my object?
2. Three words that describe my object are:
3. How do I think this object was used at Fort Point?
4. Who would use my object at Fort Point?
5. What can my object tell me about Fort Point and the people who lived at Fort Point?
6. What else do I want to know about my object?

The NPS facilitator will facilitate a class discussion based on student/group responses. Then, the facilitator will pose additional questions:

1. What have you learned about Fort Point after seeing all the objects?
2. What questions do you have about Fort Point?

Activity Two

YMCA staff will introduce students to location and current resources in the Presidio, such as trails, fields, playgrounds, how to get there, etc. Then, YMCA staff will lead students on an inquiry walk. Students are shown principles behind *Leave No Trace*, as well as trail safety in preparation for the hike at Fort Point.

Homework

Students read *Fort Point: Still Standing Guard*.

Fort Point Field Session

Duration: 3 hours

Materials: Student workbooks

Procedure: Investigation of Fort Point, Hike along the Coastal Trail and Crissy Field



Description:

Before entering Fort Point, students observe the Golden Gate and spend a few moments imagining what it was like in Gold Rush San Francisco. In small groups, students explore the fort and construct their own interpretation. They use their workbooks to record their observations, pose their own questions, and suggest possible answers.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the students meet a Fort Point Park Ranger. Students share their questions and explanations with each other and the ranger. Using an inquiry approach, the ranger guides students to compare their pre-visit questions and assumptions with their new discoveries at Fort Point, as well as consider areas for further examination. Following the inquiry experience at Fort Point, students will walk along Crissy Field and the Battery East Trail. YMCA staff will emphasize protection of the park and the wildlife found within the park. There will be a special hands-on activity about the “leave no trace” philosophy of park use and enjoyment.

Post-Visit Classroom Lessons

The follow-up activities are designed to build upon the students’ inquiry experience at Fort Point. Students can demonstrate what they have learned and how they have learned during their national park experience. Please conduct at least one of the following:

1. Have the class explore the school’s neighborhood. Pre-select an area that contains a variety of buildings. Have the groups carefully observe the design and materials to define and determine the classification of each building. Draw a map of the area and label each building with its classification. Have the groups compare their maps, determining the essential services. Pose the questions students considered for Gold Rush San Francisco:
 - a. What do you notice about this building?
 - b. What is the purpose of this building?
 - c. What does this building tell us about our neighborhood in San Francisco?Then, ask the students to discuss the similarities and differences between Gold Rush San Francisco and San Francisco today. Have the students write an individual essay answering the question “How does a building reveal what is valuable to us?”
2. Students select and define their own historic inquiry project based on their experience at Fort Point. With guidance from the teacher, students determine their own essential question and a path for inquiry.
3. Have each group select a person who lived at Fort Point. Read more information about the person’s role at the fort. Use a Jig-saw model to share information and answer questions posed by the students while at the fort. Use this exercise for students to deepen student abilities to conduct research, ask questions, and communicate findings.



Assessment

An inquiry approach to the pre-visit photograph and artifact activities in the classroom improves the field program: Students are focused on the careful inquiry of the fort, searching for answers to their questions, and are able to consider the essential question with greater confidence. We are able to conduct a simple assessment of students' experiences at the end of the field program by reviewing their notebooks in which students have written their questions and responses.

Students also will be asked to consider and answer these four questions:

1. What are 3 ways you can learn about history?
2. What does this building tell you about Gold Rush San Francisco?
3. What are two ways you can protect the parks and nature?
4. What are two things you can do for fun in the Presidio?

Further assessment is available for the teacher when students return to class and complete one of the post-visit lessons.